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# **Where Is God Today in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition?**

## ***Is there room for “God lite?”***

**John C. Haughey, S.J., *Where Is Knowing Going***

Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press. 224 pp. \$34.

By William P. George, O.P.

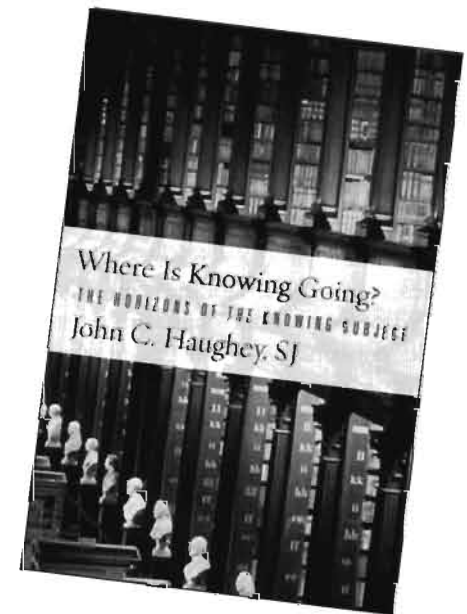
**I**n “God’s Grandeur,” Gerard Manley Hopkins declares that “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.” A similar, welcome optimism animates John C. Haughey, S.J.’s remarkable meditation on Catholic higher education. Anyone who believes this topic worth thinking through to its depths will benefit immensely from this book.

As Hopkins observed a world “seared with trade,” and where human beings seemingly forget both God and their earthly roots, so Haughey, at Georgetown University’s Woodstock Theological Center, after years in Catholic higher education, looks out upon teachers and researchers isolated in their disciplines, and institutions unable confidently to name or explain the Catholic ground upon which they stand. Many, Haughey writes, have decided not to push “the Catholic thing”; better to “let sleeping dogs lie.” Others, of course, are alarmed and call for a more explicit Catholicism—more Catholic faculty and administrators, new Catholic studies programs, more courses in Catholic theology, closer ecclesial ties. Haughey chooses a more hope-

ful and, arguably, a more penetrating path: seek first a robust understanding of *catholicity*, an understanding true and dynamic enough to propel Catholic higher education beyond its impasses in personal and programmatic ways.

The bases for that understanding, which expands and deepens over ten chapters and three brief appendices, are multiple. First are the rich narratives of those in the university trenches, some Catholic, but many not, who in their work instinctively seek a deeper meaning, a greater good, an ever more encompassing whole—scholars in many disciplines willing to ask where their knowing is going.

Secondly, Bernard Lonergan’s profound understanding of “the knowing subject” informs this volume in ways no review can adequately capture, so I will simply emphasize one point: the catholicity that Haughey elucidates is not a fixed idea or static concept, and certainly no extrinsic edict or authority, but rather a “notion,” a dynamic, questioning orientation intrinsic to human subjectivity. Just as the notion of being draws the mind to the real, so a distinct notion of catholicity, Haughey argues, begets



an attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving people a desire to seek out in their educational endeavors “higher viewpoints” and ever more inclusive “wholes.”

A third locus for catholicity, treated over two chapters, is the Catholic intellectual tradition, a broad and deep tradition not circumscribed by dogma or short lists of Catholic authors. This rich accumulation of insights and judgments, occupying multiple realms of meaning, interplays with but also enriches the Catholic

tradition in more restricted senses of doctrine and magisterial teaching.

Catholicity is not "Catholic lite." It is, however, primarily a "ground up" matter, operating in incredibly diverse subjects in their diverse fields. So lest the catholicity of Catholic higher education still appear to be without any unified meaning or character, at this point one might ask, as Haughey does, "Is there a doctrine in the house?"

Yes, there is. At the heart of the Catholic university is the lived mystery of the Incarnation. Not surprisingly, Haughey opts for a low Christology—not the Logos of John's Gospel so much as the palpable Jesus of the Synoptics who welcomes the outcast and speaks in parables about the inclusive Kingdom of God. These parables capture the heuristic, indeed eschatological, character of human knowing, and thus offer one answer to the question in the title of a book that is, at root, a theological essay of unusual subtlety and scope.

"Where is knowing going?" is a question made for capacious minds, like those from whom Haughey draws inspiration: Lonergan, surely, but also Karl Rahner, Teilhard de Chardin, the underappreciated Maximus the Confessor (580-662) (with a Christology congenial to Haughey's own), the late Monica Helwig, and figures from other faiths. Central, too, are the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, where Haughey finds God "laboring" in the cognitive acts of teachers and scholars—and certainly not in the minds of believing Catholics alone.

Human subjectivity, with its catholic, whole-seeking, and dot-connecting character, is on the move, never fully pinned down. But it is concrete. Once noticed, it can be nurtured—in many respects the very purpose of this book. In the narra-



Statue of St. Ignatius, Creighton University.

tive-centered workshops he has conducted at several schools, Haughey has caught colleagues in the act of capacious thinking—thus his optimism. The discerning reader will catch Haughey in the act as well, for instance in his reflections on a more inclusive Eucharist on Catholic cam-

pus, his sensitivity to other religious traditions, especially Islam, and his rereading of *Ex corde ecclesiae* in light of the more inclusive eschatology of John Paul II's *Redemptoris missio*.

This rich and multi-layered work will provoke questions that, by the



## Book Review

*It remains unclear to this reviewer just how crucial to Catholic education explicit, critically-appropriated religious faith should be.*

very fact of their emergence, affirm the underlying thesis: that good people working in Catholic universities will not be satisfied with half-truths, with parts masquerading as wholes (a worry shared by Newman in *The Idea of a University*). The reader's own catholicity ensures that questions are bound to arise, even if lack of space limits my own questions to three.

The first concerns the title itself. In view of the great emphasis given on Catholic campuses to such things as service and a thirst for justice, and given the shift in Lonergan's own thinking towards values, responsibility, and decision, would it be more "catholic" to ask, explicitly and often, not only where "knowing" but also where "doing" is going?

Second, it remains unclear to this reviewer just how crucial to Catholic higher education *explicit*, critically-appropriated religious faith

should be. The Incarnation is arguably a Catholic university's defining doctrine. So "those who teach in Catholic universities should understand its foundational character. They, of course, are not required to believe in it or subscribe to it. Whether they do or not is not the business of the institution. What is its business is letting its personnel in on why these institutions have been and still are of interest to the Church" (56). Now, who is to do the "letting in on"? Others who similarly may or may not actually believe the foundational truth? Or should it be those who, like the author of this volume, are astutely trained in the Catholic faith and gifted in engaging those both inside and outside the Catholic fold? If the foundational doctrine(s) say(s) something ultimate about where knowing is going, shouldn't it matter whether or not people

believe? Or are non-believers committed to catholicity in fact really anonymous Christians—a Rahnerian insight not without the very problems Haughey likely wants to avoid?

Unlike some who complain about what Catholic institutions lack, including a critical mass of committed Catholic faculty, Haughey subscribes to "the Donald Rumsfeld metaphysic about 'going to war with the army you've got'" (159). But this analogy can be turned around: Rumsfeld was duly warned that, even in terms of sheer numbers, "too few" can be a terrible mistake. I am not siding here with the complainers, but I do think the question of explicit Catholic belief and believers is worth keeping alive for the sake of the larger wholes that Haughey so ardently and expertly seeks.

A third, theological question occurred as I read. Why so few references to the Holy Spirit? The short answer is that the Spirit fully appears in the last few pages; the better answer is that in Haughey's incarnational theology of Catholic higher education the Spirit is active from beginning to end. "And though the last lights off the black West went," Hopkins wrote, "Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—Because the Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings." With a brilliance of its own, *Where Is Knowing Going?* breeds confidence that the same Spirit broods brightly over Catholic higher education today. ■



Celebrating Mass at the University of Detroit Mercy.

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